

For the past 25 years, I have worked hard as a California state legislator and, today, as a Member of Congress, to enact public policy that recognizes the needs and rights of crime victims.

When I came to Washington, I discovered there was a void in leadership on victims' issues. In order to fill the vacuum, I joined with my colleagues from across the aisle to found a new Voice for Victims in Congress: The Congressional Victims Rights Caucus, which I am proud to co-chair. The members of our bipartisan Victims' Rights Caucus believe victims have suffered enough. And because I believe so strongly in the cause of Victims' Rights, I am fighting the Administration's reckless attempt to balance the budget on the backs of victims.

Crime victims are our sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, parents and neighbors and friends who are struggling to survive in the aftermath of crime. These are people who *deserve* services and support to help them cope.

Yet, the Administration has proposed to take money from the Crime Victims' Fund and dump it into the grand abyss of the general treasury.

The Crime Victims' Fund is not taxpayers' money. The concept behind the Fund is smart and simple: We take fines levied on criminals and distribute the money to victims' service

providers. So the Administration's proposal is wrongheaded and shows no sense of history.

In 1980, President Reagan first called for a national observance to recognize and honor victims of crimes, their families, and survivors. Victims' Rights Week, which is this week, also pays tribute to the thousands of community services providers that give critical support to victims every week of the year. Victims' Rights Week has since been proclaimed annually with ceremonies and observances in across the nation.

President Reagan's commitment to the rights of victims lead to the passage of the Victims of Crime Act, which in 1984 created the Crime Victims Fund.

Yet, in spite of this history, this administration is trying to take that money, meant for victims, and place it in the general treasury. If the Administration succeeds, it will mean that those who deserve more - the victims' of crime and their families - will have less.

During the current session of Congress, along with my fellow Caucus co-chairs, I introduced a resolution that recognizes a fact that many Americans know all too well: Crime does not know any geographic, demographic or political boundary; it touches all of our communities. The Resolution expresses support for Victims' Rights Week and the Crime Victims' Fund, two legacies of President Reagan.

The Crime Victims Fund serves 3.8 million victims every year. It helps get beds in domestic violence shelters, ensure rape victims receive proper counseling and even helps families pay for funerals. Still the Fund is under attack from the Administration and that is wrong. As long as I am in Congress, I will fight any efforts that would effectively deny services to victims.

The Fund plays a crucial role in our local community's work to assist victims. Several groups here in Fresno rely on this funding source, including, the Fresno County Probation Department, the Marjaree Mason Center, the Rape Counseling Service of Fresno and the Comprehensive Youth Services organization..

These are great examples of the diverse types of organizations that receive funding - whether it is to provide health care, counseling or cover funeral expenses this funding is extremely useful in serving local communities.

Just this week, I have brought together over 100 members of Congress to demand the Fund is used for what President Reagan intended: to help victims who truly need and deserve assistance and to hold offenders accountable.

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It is the primary job of public servants to protect our citizens from harm. The Crime Victims Fund is an expression of our commitment to that principal. Because of what it is and what it

does, the Administration ought to leave the Crime Victims' Fund alone.

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